

HOUSE BILL NO. 819
Submitted by Chief Justice Karla Gray
March 16, 2007

The Judicial Branch respectfully requests that its budget be restored to the Subcommittee level, at this time, in the following two ways:

☐ ***Restore 3.95 FTE for judicial support and youth probation staff (\$162,424 for FY 2008 and \$163,054 for FY 2009).***

- Support for District Court judges (0.95 FTE). Two judicial districts lack adequate administrative support forcing judges to answer phones, handle walk-in traffic, and perform other administrative tasks, which reduces time available for judicial duties. This proposal provides 0.2 FTE for the 7th Judicial District (McCone, Richland, Dawson, Prairie, and Wibaux Counties) to increase the judicial assistant to fulltime and 0.75 FTE for the 16th Judicial District (Garfield, Treasure, Rosebud, Custer, Powder River, Carter, and Fallon Counties) to increase two judicial assistants to fulltime.
- Support for Youth Court (3.0 FTE). The 4th Judicial District (Missoula and Mineral Counties) and the 13th Judicial District (Yellowstone County) operate intensive supervision programs for juvenile offenders. These programs offer a more cost-effective and less restrictive alternative to high cost out-of-home placements, secure detention, or youth correctional facilities. Intensive supervision programs keep youth in the community under close supervision and monitoring enabling them to attend school, receive treatment in the community, and hold a job to pay restitution. This appropriation would provide funding for two community supervision officers in Missoula/Mineral Counties and one in Yellowstone County.

☐ ***Remove personal services reduction (\$500,000 for FY 2008 and \$500,000 for FY 2009).*** HB 819 reduces personal services in the District Court Operations Program by \$500,000 each fiscal year. If this roughly 2.7% vacancy savings is imposed, District Court judges will be forced to delay filling vacant support positions, which will impede the judge's ability to dispose of cases in a timely manner. Additionally, keeping Youth Court positions vacant will mean either overtime for existing staff, less services to troubled youth or both.